



# Georgia Division of Family and Children Services

## 2017 Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Panel Recommendations: Agency Response

June 1, 2018

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## **Child Protective Services Advisory Committee**

### Foster Parent Training Committee

The Committee made the following recommendations regarding foster parent training:

- Assess the comparative effectiveness of training to recruit and retain a population of foster caregivers to provide appropriate and stable placements that meet the needs of children in foster care. If results are better with another training curriculum, it should be considered as a replacement.
- To address the ongoing demand for foster care, training needs to be more universally available - more often, more locations. Alternative forms of training may be needed in order to be cost effective.
- Conduct periodic site visits to evaluate trainers. Reinforce established delivery standards and provide guidelines on permissible alternatives
- Recent advances in understanding adult learning styles need to be incorporated into the design and delivery of each training module to maximize training efficacy.
- Recommend developing supplemental training modules on fostering children that may be challenging, need specialized care or come from unique circumstances, as part of ongoing professional development for foster parents but that can also be used as immediate resources prior to, or at the time, a child needing specialized care is placed in the home
- Review and address current gaps in content such as those identified by the committee. Plan regular review of content to incorporate updates and advances identified in research, literature, and the child welfare community.
- Update or expand curriculum to address deficiencies identified.
- Include sufficient time in foster parent training to ensure that foster parents are aware of the resources available to them – local and regional and state, such as doctors, child care, etc.
- Include sufficient time in foster parent training to ensure that foster parents are aware of the resources available to them – local and regional and state, such as doctors, child care, etc.
- Avoid generalization and extremes.
- Be realistic so that expectations are realistic.
- Find a balance between too much on minor topics and too little on important ones
- Use consistent sources and provide citations for sources of information.
- Verify and repair all resource links
- When revising, use language that is understood by the population being trained.
- Review, update and expand handouts

### Division Response:

The Division understands the importance of quality pre-service and in-service training to support foster parents and is in the process of enhancing both the IMPACT curriculum and ongoing training opportunities that are available to foster parents. The Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Unit and Education and Training Unit are in the process of revising the IMPACT curriculum to maximize its effectiveness. The proposed revisions address many of the concerns raised by the CPSAC. Additional information around childhood trauma, cultural competency and realistic expectations of fostering will be incorporated. Proposed additional topics include:

- Understanding Childhood Trauma
- Visual representation of Trauma when a child enters care (Flower activity)
- How Trauma impacts the brain
- Explore how parental interventions must be different to parent children who have experienced trauma
- Definition Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Child Development
- How Trauma impacts child development
- Normalcy
- Trauma Informed Parenting (define what this concept is)
- Working with CSEC Youth
- Children experiencing sexual orientation and gender identity issues
- Transcultural parenting

The revision will also address the need to set realistic expectations about fostering by including, self-assessments, and Foster Parent Testimonial Videos based off of Wisconsin's Foster Parent Pre-Placement video that helps new foster parents understand the reality of having a child placed in their home.<sup>1</sup>It is anticipated that the revisions to IMPACT will be completed by July 1, 2019.

To maximize learning, the Division is looking at the potential for hybrid online/in person training and will make curriculum available to participants online prior to class so they have more time to digest the content and prepare questions for class meetings. Policy has been clarified to ensure that IMPACT is not taught in a single weekend, and the Practice and Program Guidance Section has worked with resource development staff in the field and child placing agencies to ensure compliance with the policy.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://wcpds.wisc.edu/foster-parent-training/foster-parent-pre-placement/>

In addition to pre-service training revisions, the Division is working to make more on-going learning options available. Recognizing that issues arise as foster parents have placements, the Division will ensure that training options are available for specific issues, such as families fostering children with special medical and mental health needs to support families as they face specific issues. The Division will also make Foster Parent College available to foster parents for on demand learning opportunities. In addition to being a resource for foster families, resource development workers can track which courses have been completed and assign ones that would benefit the foster parents. To provide further support for foster parents with children placed in their homes, caregiver technician positions have been added throughout the state. These individuals are available to foster parents to assist with interactions with the Division and identifying resources to meet the needs of children placed in their home.

#### Relative/Kinship Supports and Services Committee

The Committee made the following recommendations regarding relative/kinship services and supports:

- Conduct a review of practice to identify and address the root cause of... inconsistencies [with how information regarding placement options and resources is presented to relative caregivers].
- Provide training for staff on working more effectively and responsively with relative caregivers.
- Develop of a continuum of care that includes and values relative caregivers
- Ensure that all potential relative caregivers are informed of and provided the resources, including legal resources, that are available to support their decision to take on the care of these children.
- Provide training and resources for relative caregivers who will be caring for children with special needs or who are mentally and/or physically disabled.
- Identify and provide appropriate list of resources and referrals to caregivers to help them meet the challenge of caring for special needs children.
- Provide trauma informed/responsive training to relative caregivers.

#### Division Response

The Division places great importance on keeping children with family and highly values kinship caregivers. The Division is in the process of designing, piloting and implementing a voluntary kinship program. Along with the implementation of voluntary kinship, the Division will continue to enhance and expand services to all relative caregivers, regardless of the custody status of the child in their care.

The Division has designed a Kinship RoadMap that will help relatives and close family friends better navigate the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) and

understand the short-term and long-term implications caring for a child who is unable to live with their parents. The document provides full disclosure of agency terms and definitions, as well as information on legal options, financial support, and how to access the Kinship Navigator Program. The Kinship Navigator program is a support service available statewide. Navigators assist kinship families in identifying and locating resources within their local community. The program's overarching goal is to close the gaps and/or delays with service delivery to kinship caregivers and to be a point of contact within the agency.

In addition to support and service linkage provided by the Kinship Navigator program, the Division also recognizes the need to provide training for caregivers on trauma and other challenges, including behavior and mental health that children in their care may face. As a part of the implementation of voluntary kinship, the Division will work to ensure that appropriate training opportunities are available to all kinship caregiver, including ones who do not become licensed foster parents.

## **Children's Justice Act Task Force Recommendations:**

### Mandated Reporter Committee Recommendations

- The Task Force recommends that the Division, in collaboration with the Mandated Reporter Training committee, review data on incoming calls and redirected calls to identify the cause for the decline [in calls re-directed to the warm line], the impact it has had on CICC efficacy, and determine what action should be taken.
- The Task Force recommends that the Division continue to make these online trainings available, updating as needed to remain consistent with child welfare policy and practice.
- The Task Force recommends that the Division encourage and support future proposals of this or comparable 'train-the-trainer' trainings to increase the access and availability of quality training for communities on recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect.

### Division Response

A leadership team within the Division is currently reviewing CICC data to assess practice, policy, and the quality assurance process for intake reviews. The Division will share the findings of this review with the Children's Justice Act Task Force and will work with them to address the concerns of the subcommittee.

The Division appreciates the importance of easily accessible, quality mandated reporter training, and continues to contract with ProSolutions to host our free online mandated reporter training courses that are available to the public. The online trainings are reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect policy changes. The Division is currently partnering with Prevent Child Abuse Georgia (PCA) to explore continued support of their train-the-trainer program for in person mandated reporter training. Both the Division and PCA are working to identify geographic priority areas and professional disciplines to target with future training opportunities. The Division has also provided PCA with recent policy updates and will collaborate with PCA during the revision process to ensure training is up to date and accurate. The Division looks forward to continuing this beneficial partnership with PCA to make consistent, quality, in person mandated reporter training more widely available throughout the state.

#### Child Fatality Investigations Committee Recommendations

- The Task Force recommends the development of comprehensive protocol in partnership with the Office of Child Fatality Review, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, law enforcement and other stakeholders for identifying and investigating maltreatment-related child fatalities. The Task Force further recommends the protocol be incorporated into the state model child abuse protocol.

#### Division Response

Accurate data regarding maltreatment related fatalities is key to understanding trends and areas for practice improvement and prevention. The Division recognizes the need for consistent identification, and investigation of maltreatment related fatalities throughout the state by all involved agencies. The Division has worked closely with the Office of the Child Advocate to enhance its internal child death, near fatality, serious injury review process over the last year and is willing to engage additional partners, specifically the Georgia Bureau of Investigations Child Fatality Review to establish a model protocol for identifying and investigation maltreatment related fatalities to be used by county child fatality review teams throughout the state. The Division agrees such a protocol would enhance the state model child abuse protocol and will work with the Office of the Child Advocate to incorporate the child fatality protocol into the state model child abuse protocol when it is created.

#### Three-Year Assessment Recommendations

1. Overall, any training on child maltreatment should be reviewed and updated regularly. The Division, as the state agency responsible for child protection, must ensure that any time it updates child welfare policy, practice or procedures, it has a protocol for communicating and engaging with its partners to identify what impact

proposed changes may have on the policy, practice and procedures of each partner; potential conflicts; and ways to resolve those conflicts.

2. Additionally, at a minimum, all professionals involved in any aspect of a case involving child maltreatment (law enforcement, DFCS, DAs, SAAGs, attorneys, coroners, child death investigators, and other first responders, including EMTs, paramedics and firefighters) should be required to have at least some basic training on child maltreatment. The minimum number of hours would be determined based on the nature and extent of their involvement in the investigation of child abuse cases.
3. It is also recommended that the annual professional development requirements for professionals most involved in these cases include child maltreatment-related training.

More specifically, for law enforcement officers, it is recommended that the POST training on child maltreatment be increased from six to eight hours. It is also recommended that at least one hour of training on child maltreatment-related topics be included in their annual professional development requirements, as is required for deadly force training. The committee recognizes that this will require legislative action.

4. As it is legislated that paramedic programs be administered by an accredited program or a program affiliated with an accredited institution, similar standards should be considered for emergency medical technician (EMT) preparation programs.
5. For disciplines with training that has a child maltreatment and/or victim specialization or certification, annual professional development requirements should include an appropriate amount of training on child maltreatment-related topics.
6. The position of coroner is an elected position in Georgia. No medical or educational qualifications, beyond high school, are required to serve. Related specifically to child fatality investigations, it is recommended that basic training for coroners include training on child maltreatment in addition to eight hours on child deaths. It is also recommended that child maltreatment-related content be included in their required annual in-service training.

Training on child maltreatment for all disciplines should include child development, the effects of trauma, and strategies for handling victims with special needs. The latter is a Task Force priority.

7. For the Division, the Task Force offers several recommendations related to its workforce training.



- Include training for DFCS case managers on civil and criminal processes and court preparation including information on the Child Abuse Protocol (in new case manager training or require for ongoing training)
- Conduct cross-discipline trainings on child abuse and child fatality investigations with all disciplines, including medical, but particularly with law enforcement and case managers  
*There seemed to be a general lack of awareness, understanding and/or coordination with law enforcement when a dependency case rises to the level of criminal prosecution. The Task Force recommends that this be incorporated into cross training between DFCS and law enforcement.*
- Explore new ways to reinforce and supplement case manager learning through mini-webinars, social media, lunch-and-learns, and/or quick reference guides that take into consideration the limited time a case manager has for professional development.
- Explore developing a phone app as a quick reference guide for case managers and others involved in child maltreatment investigations. Some topics that would be helpful to case managers, as well as other disciplines, include:
  - Policies and protocols, including local child abuse protocols
  - Child development milestones
  - Interviewing children of different ages
  - Warning signs of child coaching

The Task Force will discuss the potential implementation of the recommendations with the Division.

8. The Task Force further recommends that the various disciplines that were the subject of this assessment develop and implement appropriate evaluations of the trainings. All trainings should include clearly identified, measurable learning objectives.

### Division Response

The Division would first like to acknowledge the hard work of the Children's Justice Act Task Force on this assessment and express appreciation for the time and dedication that went into completing it. The Division has reviewed the assessment closely and had a preliminary meeting with the Task Force regarding the recommendations. The agency is committed to working with the Task Force over the next three years as it refines its priorities related to the findings of this assessment. The Division's Education and Training Unit provides legal preparation training for civil cases as a part of new worker training and as a continuing education course and is exploring ways to make all training information transferable and easily accessible to workers outside of classroom trainings. Collaboration with outside agencies, including law enforcement, is a priority and the

Division will explore cross training opportunities and other mechanisms to make joint investigations more effective.

## **Child Fatality Review- Maltreatment Committee**

### Recommendations

The Maltreatment Committee recommends:

1. That training for local CFRC be more specific to the purpose and process of conducting a thorough review based on a formal child death review protocol. Training for investigators should be done separately as its purpose and objectives are distinctly different from that of a review.
2. That information on child abuse in the training should include, at a minimum:
  - Relevant child welfare law, policy and procedures
  - Model Child Abuse Protocol (CAP) standards
  - Red flags, best practices
  - Communication protocol, including standards/guidelines for notification and sharing information
3. That initial training for new CFRC include identification of prevention opportunities, including interventions that may have made a difference, and developing recommendations for effective prevention strategies. Training should include a description of the difference between preventability and culpability in a child's death as a preventable death doesn't necessarily mean that there was criminal intent.
4. That initial training for all new CFRC members include mandated reporting and CFRC member's role as a mandated reporter.  
*It is further recommended that the Division collaborate with GBI/OCFR to develop initial training for new CFRC members that will provide appropriate and sufficient training on child maltreatment, and more specifically, maltreatment-related fatalities.*
5. That CFRC members be required to complete some annual training to provide an opportunity to learn about current trends, new laws and policies, to network with their peers and to address any concerns and deficiencies.
6. That an evaluation be conducted of the current child death review protocol, training for CFRC and the review reporting processes by soliciting feedback from local CFRC to help identify opportunities to improve review and reporting quality and compliance. It is hoped that such an evaluation will provide insights on how to optimize limited resources of both GBI/OCFR and new CFRC members as well as identify additional resource needs.

7. That terminology in National Child Death Review Case Reporting System (NCDR-CRS) relevant to maltreatment be reviewed to identify inconsistencies with Georgia child welfare definitions, policy and standards of practice. Discrepancies should be resolved, as needed, and acceptable variations clarified in CFRC training to improve consistency.

#### Division Response

The Division appreciates the importance of consistent training on conducting child death reviews for all child fatality review committee members, and agrees on the benefit of incorporating education on child maltreatment and maltreatment related fatalities into such trainings. The Division appreciates the work of the Georgia Bureau of Investigations Child Fatality Review and is willing to partner with them to provide resources and any assistance possible to enhance Child Fatality Review Committee trainings.

#### **Division Closing Remarks**

The Division would like to thank the members of the Georgia CAPTA Panels for their service to the children and families of Georgia. The support and contributions of the CAPTA panels provide invaluable insight to the Division as we strive to make Georgia a State of Hope. In many ways the Division is already addressing the recommendations of the panels and this is reflective of the strong working relationship and collaboration between the Division and the panels that already exists. We value and appreciate the time and effort put into the recommendations and look forward to continuing to work together to improve outcomes for children and families in the state.